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## A.C. Holt Interview - Transcript

R. Vernon Boyd

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AN INTERVIEW WITH A. C. HOLT BY VERNON BOYD, SEPTEMBER 25, 1972 IN HIS APARTMENT IN DETROIT.

B- When did you come to Detroit?

In 1943.

B- I want to go back to your earliest remembrance of the church. Were you born and raised in the church?

H- Yes, I was raised in the church. My father was always a member of the church, but my mother was a Presbyterian, but she obeyed the gospel after I was grown.

B- Where were you born?

H- In Marshall County, in a little village called Belfast. I was born in 1891, Nove. 11.

B- Were you the oldest child?

H- No, I'm the fourth child. There were three girls older than I.

B- I don't know how the church first came to that community. You said earlier to me that it first met in homes, but who was the first preacher who came there to start the work? Was it your father?

H- No. My father wasn't a minister. There were several people of that community who were members of the Church of Christ. I really don't know when they obeyed the gospel. I can recall the day my father was baptized. I suppose the others in the church obeyed the gospel at different places. But they would get themselves together twice a year and they would have what was known as a "protracted meeting", which would be for the duration of a week or two weeks. We didn't have a meeting house, so consequently the people would g together and build themselves a bush arbor -- put up poles then covered it with green brush over it and that was where we would have our meeting under it. We did that for a number of years. Eventually we had a fellow to come through there by the name of Greer and he baptized that year 15 to 20 people. That kind of enthused the people, so my father and another fellow, by the name of Sam Davis, found out that down at the lower edge of Marshall County the white people had built themselves a new brick building as a meeting house, tearing down the old frame building and piling the lumber on the back of the church lot. Somehow my father got in touch with somebody who knew this. He went down and purchased this old building for \$100.00. Then he and Uncle Sam Davis took their wagons and went there and loaded all that lumber and brought it back home. My father purchased one-quarter of an acre of land from a very rich family known as the Orrs -- they owned thousands of acres of land and my father knew them well and they knew him. They put up that old building and the people gave them the lighting that they had used in the old building which was these old round chandeliers. My father brought all these things back and we painted them up and they were looking really nice. And that's where we began to make our best progress. Of course, it was out in the midst of the land of these rich people, but they had roads through the country so we could get to it and it was no problem. We made progress for a number of years there until the people began to move away and like many other places, there are not many people left there now. People have left and gone to the city.

B- Are they still meeting in the building?

H - No. After I had left and gone to Nashville to live, some of the brethren who were left there tore the house down and purchased a plot of land out on the highway and built a nice little block church. That's where they worship now. All of the older heads have died out and you have one younger man down there by the name of R. G. Greer and he is doing a wonderful job of holding the people together. I get a lot of pleasure of going back. I cherish the memory of that group. I go back there about once every two years. They still have the same series of meetings in May and August. I didn't get to go this year but I hope to go next.

B - Was this Orr family white? Who were some more of the black families?

H - Yes, the Orrs were white. They were Presbyterians. As to the blacks besides Sam Davis and his family, there were Jones Greer who were old settlers, Gable Yowell and his family. There was one old man and his wife and they called him John Marion. There was another old fellow by the name of Andy Purdy. He was the only member of his family that was a member of the church but he was a strong and stalwart member so far as the faith was concerned.

Then the church came about there, these old settlers who were members of the church--as I said I don't know when they obeyed the gospel--but they had large families and as the children grew old enough they obeyed the gospel from time to time during these series of meetings. I recall one time that my father became so interested in the matter of his family obeying the gospel that he went and bought a special old surrey to carry his daughters to the church of Christ in Lewisburg, Tennessee. Of course, since we had come up in this same community our associates were children and members of the Presbyterian Church. We automatically were together. We went to the same Sunday School for a number of years. But my father, realizing the importance of having the true doctrine taught to his children, made sacrifice and preparation to carry my two older sisters to church every Sunday seven miles away. He just had that kind of interest and I appreciate that until now, to make sure his children heard the gospel truth in its purity and simplicity.

[1st tape messed up. Began with a new one]

B - Regarding your earliest remembrances of the beginning church <sup>in</sup> the area of Marshall County, Tenn. I am sure there were other black churches in the area and would you identify them. Who were some of the preachers who started the churches in that area?

H - At that time, <sup>the time I lived</sup> ~~Tenn. Co. Tenn.~~ <sup>Lewisburg</sup> there--I wasn't too familiar with the churches other places--I do recall there was a church at a place called Richmond, Tenn. that was on the edge of Bedford County--there was a church at Northberg, Tenn. and lets see, there was a church at Shelbyville, Tenn. and that's just about all I remember now. I was quite young and of course I guess I didn't pay as much attention as I did after I have gotten older.

B - I understood, from some other people I have talked to, that the earliest Disciples among the black people occurred <sup>near</sup> Centerville, Tenn. <sup>between</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>Murray</sup> Hickman County. Do you know anything about this? <sup>Murray</sup>

H - Well I just heard about it--they do have churches down there, being quite young and not paying so much attention to things back there I have heard it talked about I am sure. and so far as the age is concerned, I just couldn't say. I imagine they were quite old but not being familiar with and not having so much interest at that time, I wouldn't know. ~~8233~~

E Then let me ask you, what were some of your earliest experiences in terms of events between blacks and whites in Marshall County that influenced your life? In other words, the tension between blacks and whites.

H - Well, at that time, I was quite young and didn't pay too much attention to that because there was usually some certain thing that we did and things white people did and we were accustomed to that and consequently we didn't pay too much attention to that. In our community, to me there wasn't too much tension strife and things like that. We knew the condition of the people down there, the white people, we knew about the black people as you may know, they weren't as close together as they could have been--in other words, down there you were just a negro--you see the negro <sup>was a person you</sup> didn't pay much attention to, my father--my parents always taught me to be sure that I didn't infringe on the rights of anybody else and they told me I would get along through life, and I found that to be true. ~~then~~

B - Were there any particular good relationships which you had in your early life with white people?

H - Yes, quite a few. There were white people there that were very sympathetic toward the negroes and especially the negroes who tried to hold themselves to a standard that was worthwhile. There has been times in my life or our lives, when we couldn't make it, if it hadn't been for some good white people that we knew. And there were several people like that--while there were many others who were quite different.

B - Do you have any names, or specific events or instances of this?

H - Yes, I have one instance that will always be with me--there was a time when my whole family were down sick with the measles, except myself and my father and it became necessary that I do most of the cooking--we had people who would come in and help clean the house, do the washing and things like that but I especially remember this event--we had a merchant there in Belfast, his name was Tom McAdams--I recall my father, he had to work of course and he sent me to the store one time to get a \$1.00 worth of meat and I went to the store and Mr. McAdams carried me up to the grain house, we called it, where we kept all the meat and things like that--he threw a side of meat down on the scales, and split it half in half, put it in a bag, gave it to me to take back home. I offered him the \$1.00 but he wouldn't take it, said go on back home and I will never forget that, because I was old enough to realize what that meant. Then there was Mr. Hugh <sup>Kennard</sup> ~~Lenard~~, he was a member of the Church of Christ, he was very kind and after my father had passed my mother was living out there, I was living in Nashville at the time, <sup>her</sup> ~~the~~ house caught on fire and burned down. He came over, told her <sup>not</sup> to worry, said we are going to start tomorrow we are going to the woods, cut logs, carry them to the mill, <sup>set out</sup> ~~make~~ the lumber and build you a house. We will see you have a house to live in until we get that done. Well, his intentions were good and he would have done it, but after I was living in Nashville I came back home and my mother was working for a man by the name of <sup>Tom</sup> Craig doing the washing for him and the cleaning I came home she did not know I was coming and he told her he had a house over there not far from where our house burned. He told me to go over and clean up that house <sup>come get my team (of horses)</sup> ~~put~~ your mother in it <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ she could live there as long as she wanted too, I thought that was quite nice. And she lived there until I came from Nashville and moved her to Nashville, Tenn. And that is where she passed in 1950. shell out?

B - You grew up then in this community, Belfast, and what age were you baptized?

H - I was about <sup>14</sup> 15 years old when I was baptized.

B - And you said this preacher was who?

H - His name was Frank Fishback, peculiar name.

B - Where did he live?

H - Well, he lived in that community of Belfast and a while in Bedford county you know how preachers are, and other people, they move about from place to place wherever he was in that county or community he would come around and do the preaching for us.

B - This community in Marshall county is not too far from *Pulaski* I believe that it is the next county west, something like that.

H - Yes, *Pulaski is in* the next county southwest of Marshall county.

B - Well, that is the place that the KKK started and that is why I was trying to ask you in terms of the bitter racial problems in that early era. Did you know of any?

H - No, I didn't know too much about that. I don't know for some reason we didn't come in contact with that as much as others, I guess my father knew alot about it he never did talk much about things like that to his family.

B - Did your family have any religious journals coming into the home?

H - No, not at that time.

B - Then you mainly went week to week with your bible study and you studied that kind of literature. I am trying to find out the influence of the Gospel Advocate. I know it was a very powerful influence with both the white and the black and when that influence or did it ever come into your life? Your families life?

H - Not at that time it did not reach us we didn't get a religious periodical if we ever had a thing like that doubtless it was given to us in paper or something like that. *Consequently* we weren't pressed into reading and I guess for that reason we didn't have too great an interest in it.

B - Speaking of reading, what was the educational situation in that town?

H - I guess it was on about the average of most other places in the south. We had our public schools we went from 3 to 5 months in the year. And that is about all.

B - But there were both black and white schools, did the black school have a consistant educational system every year?

H - No, No, not that I knew about.

B - Where did your teachers come from, would they be local people?

H - Yes, they would usually be local people. We had back when I was younger they had what they called the County Institute that is where all the teachers of the county would come together for a period of two weeks and the county superintendent would outline certain portions of the study to the teachers we would go there and go over those things during the two weeks we would have various teachers teach different subjects. Then after the two weeks were up we would take an examination that the county superintendent would make out. And they who passed that examination was given a certificate to teach the schools.

B - Are you saying you were a teacher?

H - *Yes* I was a teacher at that time, I don't know what kind.

B - How old were you?

- I was turning into my 18th year.

B - How many years did you teach?

H - I taught 2 years in the county school.

B - And this was while you were still at home before you went to Nashville?

H - Yes, that was before I went to Nashville.

B - How did you get interested in teaching?

H - Well, I don't know I was always interested in people and I just went to the county institute and passed the examination and they gave me a certificate. And the county superintendent sent me to a school.

B - Was this institute for both blacks and whites?

H - No, this would be for the white people. White people had their's and we had ours.

B - And you passed the test given to the whites?

H - Yes, I passed the examination that was...I couldn't say about that.

- What I am asking is...is there one test for the blacks and a different test for the whites?

H - I couldn't say. I couldn't say because we had what we called our County Institute we came together we went over the subjects and as I say each teacher would teach a certain subject and we had to cover a certain amount of every study or every book then the county superintendent would make out the examination and we would take the examination if you passed you would get a certificate to teach, of course, if you didn't why you weren't supposed to teach. So far as the examinations we had being the same as the white had I can't say.

B - When did you go to Nashville and why?

H - Well, it is kind of a long story. There was a man in Nashville, he was the United States District Attorney there in Tennessee. My mother partially helped raise him. His father and my mother's father and mother lived in the same community <sup>they were around the mechanics</sup> and I have heard her tell she carried him on her back many times so he kept in touch with us. With our family. I guess for that reason because they knew him back there. I was living at Belfast, I was farming at the time and he came out to my house and asked me if I wanted a job. I asked him what and he explained to me it sounded good to me, but I told him I can't come because I have to gather in my crop. He said to go ahead and gather in my crop come on to Nashville when you get there the job will be waiting for you. I did just that. Went there in 1921. Went to the state capitol as a porter, for a number of years. About 3 years I believe. At that time I was porter for the Dept. of Agricultural, Dept. of Education and the Dept. of the Supreme Court. I was working for all those departments. Then while I was in the Dept. of Education getting ready to do my work a man by the name of P. L. Harned, he was the rural school agent with the

Sp?

Dept. of Education. He called me one day and said Clarence when you are thru with your work come into my office I want to talk with you. I didn't know if I did something wrong or what so when I finished my work I went into his office to talk with him. He said Clarence I have been watching you work around here for about 3 years now and you appear to be a man that attends to his own business, does his work and doesn't bother anybody else's business. He said I am going to tell you something, he said I think you are a man that I can tell you things. He said do you know W.J.Hale? I said yes fairly well he is a friend of mine. He said I know you know how to keep your mouth, he said Austin Peay at Clarksville Tenn. is going to be made Governor of Tenn., I am going to be made Commissioner of Education. We are going to move down to the new War Memorial Building and take the greater portion of the second floor for the Dept. of Education. When we get down there, I am going to give you a job, you deserve a better job than you have, And as long as you do your work, you will be there as long as I am there but the thing I have in mind he said if you fail to do the work it would be out of the question for me to keep you there. He said I can't keep you sitting around in an office if you don't do your work, but if you do your work you will be there as long as I am there. But I didn't believe a word of it. Sure enough when they moved down there he gave me one of the largest offices that were on that floor. So I didn't know what he wanted, what he wanted me to do. So the rural school division they came in and put in a plea for ~~told me to leave~~ the office. He came ~~in and~~ <sup>to me and told me</sup> said now you know how it is the rural school division was put into this office and we have to let them have it, I may have to put you downstairs, somewhere until they get organized up here. Finally we will be working on the same floor as one big family. This made an impression on me. He said you come in, in the morning and we will talk this matter over so I went in, and while we were talking in his office a lady by the name of Miss Ema Watts came in, ~~from the rural school library~~ <sup>she was</sup> she said excuse me Mr. Harned I didn't know you had company. He said come in Miss Watts Clarence and I don't care if you hear what we say. So she came into our conversation and she said Mr. Harned, excuse me, will you allow me to make a suggestion? He said yes. She said why don't you give Clarence office #226 right there, we could work together for a lifetime and get along. He said Miss Watts that is one of the finest things I have ever heard you say, We will just do that. So he put me there. We worked side by side there for 8 years straight. We never had a cross. We had ~~desks~~ <sup>desks</sup> alike we had typewriters alike I'd get behind in my work she would come sit down the other side of my desk and help me until I caught up with my work. <sup>id do the same for her</sup> We worked there for 8 almost 9 years and didn't have one cross. So I stayed in that office for ten years. And I can't begin to tell you the experiences I had while I was there.

B - Do tell some of them--it sounds interesting.

H - Well, you know how it is in every organization. Somebody in the organization just does not see things alike. We had a lady from Brushy mountain I won't call her name, but anyway she came down where I was working she brought a pamphlet into my office one day and said Clarence <sup>weigh</sup> look at this see how much it will take to send it out. I said, I'll put a cent and a half on it and sent it out. She said, I asked you to weigh it. I said, I send these bulletins out every day. I know what it takes. Well, I want it weighed. Well you know, that little mule that was in me <sup>came</sup> up, and I said, all right, if you can't take my word for it, you weigh it yourself. So she walked right into the commissioners office, she knew where to go. So, when she came back, she came back with the commissioner with her and as soon as they stepped into the door of my office the devil in me got as big as a mule. So, he said, Clarence, what is this I hear about this girl bringing mail in here and you don't weigh it? He said, ~~ain't~~ <sup>ain't</sup> that your job? I said, yes sir, that's right. Isn't it a matter of fact, Clarence, you are the only man in the department of education that knows all the mailing zones, knows about the staffs and everything? I said, yes sir, that's right. Well, why is it that you refuse to weigh the mail? That's your work, isn't it? I said, Yes that's part of my work. I said, now wait, let me explain it to you. I guess I was trembling in my voice 'Cause I <sup>was</sup> ~~got~~ <sup>was</sup> not tempered then. I said, listen,



Mr. Harned, yes I know all the mailing zones, I know all the mailing weights, and thats my job and I look after everybodys mail and I said, another thing, you know I send these bulletins out every day, don't I? He said, yes, I know that. I said, you ever have any mail come back with anything wrong with it? No, thats why I'm surprised. Why did you object to weigh it, you know that's your work. I said, I'm going to tell you just like it is--this lady came in here and she handed me this bulletin and she said Clarence, weigh this and see how much it will take to send it out. I said, I took it in my hand and I said, put a cent and a half on it and send it out. That will take care of it. And she got contrary, and said, I want it weighed. So, I explained to her I send these bulletins out every day. And, she got contrary and I said, if you don't want to take my word for it, there's the scales, weigh it for yourself. He turned around and said, is that the way of it? She said, yes, but I want it weighed. So, he said, well, I'm going to break this thing up right now. He said, this is Clarences' office, this is his work to look after this mail. Whenever you bring anything in here, and Clarence tells you what to put on it, you put that on it, send it out, and if it's wrong, I'll see Clarence. He said, now you understnad what I'm saying? She said, well, I want---. He said, I said, listen, whatever he tells you to put on it, you put on it, send it out and if there's something wrong with it, I'll see Clarence about it. You have your work in your office. Clarence has no business going in there telling you what to do. You got no business coming in here telling Clarence what to do. He said, I don't want this to happen again. He said, we're all going to stay, coming up with this very same thing that he told me before we went down there, so we're always going to be one great family here and we're going to work together. He said, now if you bring anything in here, you put it on and send it out. Her face turned red as fire. She went on back. He said, now I don't want this to happen again. You know what she did---she came back to the office door with her hands on her hips--it's funny to me now, but it was tough then, she said, Clarence Holt, I knew you were right about the mail, but do you know what I didn't like? I said, no I don't know, and I don't know that I care. She said, I just didn't want to be outdone a nigger. Well, you know that made me hot! Well, I said, come on, you're going to meet the commissioner. You just might as well come on, because I'm going to report you right now. She wouldn't go. So, I went and told the commissioner what she said. He said Clarence, did she say that? I said, yes she certainly did and I tryed to get her to come in, and she wouldn't come. He said, now let me tell you, you acted with good sense. Now, you go on back and do your work, what you were doing and if she comes back, don't you say a thing to her. He said, I'll see her about this. Well, I took the 'ol mans advice because he was nice to me. I went on back and about two mornings after then, I came to work and she was already there. She was out in the hall. She was crying it down, she was boo-hoo-in. She didn't care who heard her neither, she was crying! Well, I didn't know what in the world was wrong. So, there was another girl there, she was a member of the Church of Christ. We were kind of partners, you know how it is. She said, you know what? I said, what? She said, you know you got Miss So-and-so fired? I said, no, you're joken. She said, Mr. Harned fired her this morning. I said, WHAT? She said, you sure got her fired. I said, I didn't do it, she fired herself. And, there's several other instances that would be fun to you, be fun to me now. But it made me hot then. Some fellows came in one day. I was sitting back there in the office typing. I noticed these fellows walking down the hall and looking. They got down to my office and stopped and looked in. Finally, one ventured in and said, who's office is this? I said it's the Department of Education. I mean, who's boss in here? I said, Mr. Harned, Commisioner of Education. He's boss of all these offices. You know what I'm talking about. I mean, who works in here? I do. *He said, 'By God, You're not going to be in here long'* I thought, you ain't going to be here long. You wait until *Thompson's (?)* get's elected, we're going to send you back to the farm where you belong. A lot of little instances like that happened. They made me hot then, but they are fun to me now.

B I guess you knew some of the govenors. Do you have any instances of some of the big names of the history of that time?

1 - Yes, when I first went to work, it was in the Republican administration and ~~Ab~~ *Ab* Taylor was govenor, and I got acquainted with 'ol man *Ab* by going out to the house sometimes, and doing things for him and he would invite me into his room upstairs and



we would sit up there and talk a long time and he liked to play the fiddle. And, he'd play the fiddle for me. At the time I worked there, I knew all the presidents of the state schools. Morris at Knoxville, Lyons, at Murfreesboro Bistle at West Tennessee, Q.M. Smith at <sup>Polytech</sup> in Cookville. I was acquainted with all of them. They came to my office to get supplies. In other words, they'd write in. In that way, I got acquainted with a lot of them. I knew all of the county superintendents, all the city superintendents, knew all the constables, and things like that, the various countys. It was quite a job. I enjoyed it. Knew all the city superintendents.

B - Well, this attitude of the man who put you in here must have been rather unusual for that time.

H - It was. I guess that's why it impressed me so much. When he first talked to me about it, I didn't have a bit of confidence in him. I thought that maybe he had something he wanted me to do. But, I found it quite different. He was just above the average at that time.

B - Do you know why?

H - No, I can't say why. He did tell me. He said, now I don't always try to have the right attitude toward colored people. I raised up with colored people, I slept with colored people, I sucked my 'ol mammys' breast. He told me that. I just figured by that, that he had been pretty close connected with them all the while. You find people like that.

B - Yes, but it was just not usual for someone to bring someone into a rather high office and let them work at that level from the Negro race at that time.

H - No, that was kind of a surprise. I guess that's the reason why I didn't put too much confidence in what he said. But, now when other things became explained to you as facts and reality, you have got to change your mind. He was just a straight-forward man to me. He had that attitude. He was this type of fellow-if you tried to be something, he tried to help you. And, I can appreciate that.

B - Well, did he go to school in the north by any chance, to give him a different attitude than the typical southern attitude?

H - I don't know. I don't think so. Because he was, I think, raised somewhere in East Tennessee. That's where his father was. I just don't know why.

B - You know what town in East Tennessee?

H - No, I do not. I think it was in East Tennessee.

B - Well, you know the eastern third of Tennessee fought with the north during the war between the states and he might have come with a different orientation because that was not a slave-holding section of Tennessee.

H - Well, I don't know about that. All the things that I know, I know because he told me that proved out to be like he said, so far as I ever knew.

B - Well, then let's go back, <sup>as mentioned</sup> ~~to religion and~~ slavery, do you have any remembrances of your parents or grandparents-speaking of slave conditions-any instances?

H - Yes, my father was born in the year of the surrender of the war between the states. And, my grandmother was living. She came from North Carolina. She was sold in North Carolina to a woman in Tennessee, named Betty (Becky) Holt.

*miss' two*  
That's where we get our name. I don't know who we are, or what we are, but that's where our name came from. My grandmother was a slave. My auntie who lived to be 119 years old, and they didn't know how much older. *known* We ~~should~~ lived that long. She was a slave. I heard my grandmother tell of this woman Betty (Becky) Holt. My auntie was named after her- Betty (Becky). And, she was a young girl, and she would wait on her mistress, Betty (Becky) Holt. And, there's a lot of things she said that would not be of *of doubt* the darkest interest to you. This slave-holder was a great drunker, and she told how my auntie would wait on him and have to do for him, and so forth.

B - I don't know, it sounds interesting. Where was this?

*Lincoln*  
H - In ~~Laythorn~~ County, Tennessee. *I ran upon,* *a* ~~Atlanta born~~, I guess you'd call it, coincidence, I was preaching in Atlanta Georgia, that was around 1935-36. I had chosen to be out in a suburban part of Atlanta, a place called Rock City. I was selling a tonic. I went into a lady's house one morning and introduced myself to her. She said, well, can you just wait here a minute and my husband will talk with you. *And I thought* She went back into the kitchen, and she came in and said, Mr., what did you say your name was? I said Holt. She said, my grandfather was named Holt. I said, it was? Where did he live, where did he come from. She said, I don't know. We know all about our grandmothers people, but we don't know very much about our grandfathers people. I said, what was his name? She said ~~Robert~~ Holt. I said, you know where he came from? She said, no, but my father is coming up here next month and I'll ask him, and let you know ~~when~~ he comes. So, the father came and the next time I went out there, she said, her grandfather was named ~~Edward~~ Holt, he was born in Lincoln County, Tennessee. Now this is what happened. I heard my grandmother tell this many times. She had two sons that left home the year of the surrender of the war. One was named Richard (called him Dick), the other was named ~~Event~~, and she never saw these sons from that day until the day she died. And, the girl that was talking to seemed to me to be as much like my sister Ethel as if they were sisters. Well, I finally just ~~as much~~ *to run upon her,* concluded that that was my uncle, my fathers' brother.

B- Just chanced ~~around a corner.~~ *to run upon her,*

H- Just chanced ~~around a corner.~~ *to run upon her,* This lady, his granddaughter.

B- You mentioned your auntie. Did she come with this Holt family? Or did she take a different name from a different slave-owner?

H- No, she took the name of Holt. That was my grandmothers' daughter, Betty (Becky) Holt, named after her old mistress. So, she was a Holt. Of course, she married a time or two. But, when she died, we traced her age and we could get her back without any fear of mistake, to fix her age at 119 years old when she died. Before she passed, every prominent, I guess most every prominent, newspaper man visited her and interviewed her. *of ?*

B- Where did she live and pass away?

H- She passed away at a convalescent home in Nashville, Tennessee.

B- Did she live most of her life there, at least the latter part?

H- No, she lived the most of her life in Belfast Tennessee, around in that section. That's where she grew up. Of course, she grew up in Lincoln County, Tennessee, where my grandmother lived, where there were slaves. Then after, I don't know how it came about. It came about that they came to Marshall County, but my grandmother came with my father. *father* married my mother from that county. Of course, as far back as I can remember they were always there.

R- Brother Levy Kennedy mentioned that back in those early times that some of his grandfathers' brothers took a different name because they were sold to a different master.

H- That's right.

B- Do you know of any kind of situation like that in your family?

H- No, I don't know of anything like that.

B- They all took the same name.

H- All took the name of Holt-clean on down.

B- Did you know of any cases of any racially-mixed marriages or mixed situations coming out of this? It was very common back then, I understand.

H- In our family?

B- Right.

H- No, not in our family, I don't know of any. So far as I can go back, it was just Holts. There was no mix up that I ever knew about.

B- Right. What were your early ambitions in life? What did you want to be and, for instance, when you went to Nashville, I know that you were invited up there for this job you mentioned. Did you have any other ambitions as to what you wanted to do? Did you ever dream of coming north, for instance?

H- No, at that time, I never dreamed of coming north. And, I don't really know what my ambition was. I was at this type of ambition about whatever I attempted to do, and I think my father instilled that in me. He said, whatever you do, learn to do it as well as anybody else or a little bit better, if possible. Now, he instilled that in me. And, that was my ambition. I've done a little bit of most everything. I don't know of anything in the way of work, in certain lines of work that I haven't done. I always had an ambition to do something. I really didn't know what I had in mind. I never dreamed that I'd be engaged in the line of work that I'm in now.

B- How did you get interested in preaching?

H- Well, I always had this ambition relative to the Bible. In fact, if anything, I wanted to be able, if I said anything that I wanted to know that it was right. You see, I've been around people who discussed a lot of things at this time. But, that was my ambition. I studied the Bible 15 years at home before I ever attempted to preach. In those years, I wasn't even thinking about preaching. I just wanted to know the Bible. 'Cause I don't know much of it, but that was my ambition, if I had any ambition at all.

B- What really prompted this early beginning of the Bible study?

H- Well, I'll tell you <sup>just</sup> this is exactly what did it. When we were children growing up, I was a boy from early age on up from 13, 14, 15, 16 years old, we had no place to go to Sunday school but the Presbyterian Church. That's where we went, we had no other place to go. But <sup>some how or another</sup> ~~soon, I remember~~, they never were able to get into me, or my brother either, the things that they taught. Now, here's what baffled us- we'd read the text, and it would say this, and it said now it says this, but it means this. That's what they told us. We couldn't get that in our head. And, what we did after we got 14 or 16 years old, we sometimes stayed outside from Sunday school time till the middle of the evening arguing with those folks. We'd argue them down, and they couldn't do anything with us. They just couldn't do it. 'Cause they didn't have anything. *Finally, they say, leave those*

*ambitions alone, you can't do anything with them*

I think that's where my ambition started. I'd go home, I'd sit up late at night and read my Bible. I did most every night. I guess I got in the habit of that. After, I came to Nashville, I still studied the Bible and, of course, they kind of pushed me in after I'd gotten married.

B- How?

H- Well, after they found out I was working in the church, and I was studying the Bible, and seemed to have fairly good knowledge of the things that I talked about, they pushed me in. At first, I think they pushed me into teaching class. And, then for some reason, the superintendent was an older man, much older man than I. For some reason, he had to quit. So, they pushed me into superintendent of Sunday School for a while. And, then they put me back into teaching the class. And, to my surprise, one of the elders, Brother Black of Nashville, he's dead now, he got up one Sunday morning and announced to the church that Brother Holt would preach for us on Wednesday night. He didn't ask me anything about it. He said I'd preach for them Wednesday night. We have Bible class on Wednesday night. Well, it shocked me so, I didn't have nothing to say. So, I went back home and scrambled around. I don't know what I did. 'Cause naturally they encouraged me. They said I did fine. And, from then on, he never asked me. I started to preach on Sunday morning. We didn't have a regular minister at that time. I would get up there and do the best I could. So, here I am.

B- That's an interesting experience.

H- It's *quite an* ~~fine~~ experience, fine experience in life. But, I appreciate it.

B- Now, this was in the Jackson street church?

H- No, I'll tell you what happened there. Some kind of a ~~split~~ *split* came up in Jackson street and the people pulled out and got a worshipping place on 14th and Jefferson and that created quite a stir- couldn't begin to tell all of that - But, the people that were interested in it, we kept working on it and finally went back to Jackson street. And, talking that over, the work ~~was~~ *was* getting along so well on 14th and Jefferson until we agreed to disagree. We went back to working, working back and forth together and the result is now there are several congregations there in Nashville, Tennessee.

B- Were you knowledgeable of when the first group of gathering came out at the Gay street Christen Church?

H- No.

B- Have you heard any talk about it?

H- Yes, I've heard some talk about it. But, I don't know enough about it to relate anything to it in a definite way. I know I preached at Gay street. They have an act of having what they call a Homecoming Day. It would be a home coming week. I was preaching at Jefferson street at that time. We had already built Jefferson. So, they had their home coming week, and those people at Gay street would invite all the preachers, and give all the preachers a night or a day or sometime. So, they would invite the Methodist preachers, and the Baptist preachers and the different denominations, and the preachers of the Church of Christ. So, this home coming week, they invited me, and they made me the last man. I preached the last Sunday. Begin one Sunday and preach for the other Sunday. So, they asked me that last Sunday, I preached that Sunday. And one of the elders was impressed. He said, he was impressed. He asked me, can't you come back tonight and preach? I told him, yes I could come back. I could make arrangements. He said, come back.

So, I agreed and I came back and so he asked me, why don't you preach for us a few nights this week? The people are coming and I think it would be nice. Well, the preacher, he began to cry fish. He began to tell that the light bill was too much, and it's getting cool for the fall of the year and we don't have any coal. So, I finally suggested I'll send some coal out here. I sent 1/2 ton of coal out there to keep the meeting going. So, Monday night, I preached in the auditorium upstairs. Tuesday night, he put me in the basement to preach. And, Wednesday night he put me on the street! (laugh)

B- Did you get too hot for him?

H- I don't know. I guess so. So, I told the people, and the people are just teaming in. I said, Listen, this meeting isn't going to stop. It's not going to be here, but it will be at Jefferson street. You come over to Jefferson street and we're going to finish this meeting. And, they did. And that week, the latter part of that week, we got 11 members from the Gay street church. (laugh)

B- Well, I know this division earlier occurred over the instrument. Where they using the instrument there during the services that you were having?

H- No, not during the services I was having.

B- They did that out of accommodation to you?

H- I suppose they did. In fact, I hit them so hard on that, they couldn't have played the thing if they had it. <sup>that's the reason I had to leave</sup> ~~I didn't believe in that.~~ I preached the truth just like it was. I thought, at least. So, we just <sup>came on</sup> ~~went~~ out and we got some mighty faithful members from that group. We had one old lady named Sister Linsten. She was a worker there and she was a worker when she came into Church of Christ. So, we organized a Bible study in her home on a Monday night. In the course of 12 months, one year, we baptized 18 people out of that Bible class. And, that resulted in this old lady and Sister Alexander <sup>well</sup> ~~Campbell~~ getting together and organizing a group of ladies and they bought me a tent- a 30' by 50' tent- and sent me away from Jefferson street.

B- Well, you out-grew Jefferson that way, huh?

H- Well, no I'd go back <sup>once a</sup> ~~the rest of the~~ year for 12 or 13 years. I went back there this year to preach what they call the anniversary sermon. I hadn't been there, in years. But, now, they bought this tent. Sister <sup>Campbell</sup> ~~Campbell~~ had a lot out there on Albion street. We put that tent up there and preached two weeks, baptized 26 people. We moved from there to Lawrenceburg and preached two weeks, and baptized 26 people. We moved from Lawrenceburg to Memphis, Tennessee on <sup>Marginal (?) + Kames</sup> ~~we came back~~ and baptized 26 people. <sup>one night</sup> ~~the next~~ year about 5 blocks on Davidson + Douglas, and preached two weeks and baptized 26 people. That's an actual fact. I guess that was the cycle.

B- When you first went to Nashville, you did attend the Jackson street church, or were there two groups existing at that time?

H- Well, the two groups really were existing at that time. I went there, and, of course, I went to Jackson, and I went to Jefferson. It was on 14th and Jefferson at that time. Their confusion had come up even before I got there.

B- Was that the holy kiss controversy?

H- Well, I really don't know. I don't think they knew really what it was. I think it was a more personal matter than anything else. The kiss, of course, all that came up in the confusion. But, to me, it's a personal matter. This fellow - I'll just outdo you, I'm not going to agree with you. And it's just a spat.

B- Who were some of the early persons in both congregations? I'm looking for names. Not necessarily who's on what side. But, who were some of the early names that were significant in the church at that time?

H- Oh, Brother Keeble, of course, <sup>automatically.</sup> The other men at the time - there was Tom Harris, P. H. Black, Ed Smith, Ison Walker, and numeral people that were engaged in it. They were called leaders. They were the leaders, and, of course, that's what always <sup>lodges</sup> 'cause they always have their folks who are on this side and on the other side.

B- When did you first meet Brother Keeble?

H- Well, I'll tell you. Personally, I know less about Brother Keeble and his preaching, and things, I guess, than anybody. Or as little as anybody. Because after I'd gone to Nashville, I was very active in the church work. Keeble was out, I was out. I've heard him preach. I knew him, but we were not around each other very much. And, I would just say the first time or two to establish any special days when I first met him, I wouldn't attempt to do that. I came to Nashville, he was living there. Of course, we automatically came together, both being members of the church and things like that. But, just some special date that I could specify, I wouldn't attempt to do that.

B- Then Brother Bowser, when did you first meet him? I assume it was in the church.

H- No, it wasn't. I was down Belfast Tennessee. I don't know the year, but one of the members I mentioned this morning, Andy Purdy, he passed, we didn't have any place for his funeral or meeting house to preach his funeral in, so we carried his body to the cemetery, out there under a big oak tree. And, old Brother Fishback I mentioned also, <sup>He was</sup> there to preach the funeral. While we were there ready to begin the service we looked up the road, saw a man coming down the street. One armed man, cross-eyed come walking up. And he introduced himself to Brother Fishback and Brother Fishback in turn introduced him to the people that were there that day. G. P. Bowser. That was the first time I had ever met him. And, I'm going to say I don't think I ever heard a man preach like that man preached that day. I was surprised, he knew the Bible almost backwards and forwards from memory and we just stood in amazement and listened to that man preach on that funeral occasion. Well, my father, and <sup>old man Sam Davis</sup> ~~my son babies~~ and some <sup>others</sup> ~~how or other~~ we got together and said we have to have that man preach for us. So, they asked the Presbyterians they had a nice meeting house that night for him to preach in. They said no, we can't let that man in our meeting house. So, my father got his horse. They use to have 3 commissioners who governed the school. My father got on his horse and went to everyone of those commissioners and got permission for him to preach in the school house, the county school house. And, he preached there 3 nights and everyone of those Presbyterians were right there.

B- Did he baptize any of them?

H- No, he didn't baptize any of them, but this fellow Greer came there one time and got into the family and that's what started us there.

B- You keep mentioning this Greer. Is he an ancestor of Douglas Greer?

H- His name was Douglas Greer, but he was an older man than Doug you know at Washington.

B- But not Kin?

H- I couldn't say. There were several Greer's and several of them were preachers. He was a Greer and that is all I can say and I think he was a Douglas Greer. I don't know if he's related to this Douglas you know in Washington or not. But, he came there and did a wonderful job. He got into the Presbyterian family and, of course, they hated it mighty badly, but they couldn't do anything about it. From then on, he ~~went to Bush Harbor~~ <sup>did that kind of work</sup>. That inspired the people, inspired my father and those old fellows. So, they got busy and found an old meeting house that had been torn down and bought that quarter acre and built that house and from then on we did, I think, extremely well. We had Dennis English there. I don't know if you ever met Dennis or not.

B- His widow?

H- His widow - he was a wonderful man. He was far above the average.

B- Excuse me, I met Paul

H- That was Paul's uncle. He preached for us 8 years. The church grew almost by leaps and bounds while he was there and, of course, after he left people left the country and went to the city, and just left nobody there. Dennis English had, I believe, the smoothest flow of the English language of any man I've ever heard. Of course, I don't know much about English, but there is a white teacher in Petersburg, Tennessee, <sup>where he</sup> held a meeting down there two weeks and she was a critic, she came to the tent for that purpose. So, she walked up and told him you are a Negro preacher, but you have done something that I never - she said I'm a critic - you have done something I have never heard a man do, you preached here two weeks and with your flow of English you made two mistakes, and you went back and corrected them. She said, I never heard a thing like that in my life.

P That was a complement. How did he get his education?

H- Well, I don't really know. He went to county school.

B- Down there?

H- I don't know just exactly where. I couldn't say, but he did go to college in, somewhere in Louisville or St. Louis. I don't know if he ever finished college or not and I really don't think he did.

B- What was Brother Bowser doing down there at the time, did he know about the funeral?

H- No, he just happened <sup>along</sup>. He didn't know a thing about it. He just happened in. You know he used to travel around a lot and I don't know why he was down there. I don't know how he got word there was a funeral that day. But, he just happen to be coming there. Some ~~months~~ <sup>one</sup> sure ~~they~~ told him that they were having a funeral. When we looked up, he was just coming, that's all we knew.

B- Walking?

H- Walking.

B- He didn't have any horse or ....

H- No horse, no saddle, no car, no wagon, no anything, on his two feet. The cross-eyed, one-armed man. He came on down the road, mostly country road, by the cemetery, walked up and introduced himself. Brother Fishback in turn, Brother Fishback had heard of him, but it was the first time he had ever seen him, he introduced him as a man he had heard of and asked him to take charge of this funeral. He took charge, too!



B- Do you know about what year this was?

- No, I can't tell.

B- Before W.W. I?

H- Yes. Before W.W. I.

B- Well, I know the Christian Echo was started in 1902 or 1903 and I wonder how long Brother Bowser had been around to get a reputation by this time.

H- Well, Brother Bowser was a man who stirred around a lot. He would go - go and did that until he passed on. He used to walk for miles, they'd tell me. You see, Brother Bowser was educated for a great leader in the Methodist Church, I'm told, so after he got his education he *flipped on them.*

B- Then your coming to Nashville, you were associated with him there what time he was in town?

H- Very little. Only when he would come in town that most of that time he was in Fort Smith, Arkansas. And, we had purchased a 7 acre <sup>plot</sup> parcel of land there in Nashville to build a school. <sup>not</sup> I think we paid for it in 1928. But, somehow we were not able to accumulate enough money to convert the building that was on it to school building and start school so he came in there. He had a school in Ark. then, so, of course, he was interested in school up there <sup>met him from time to time</sup> and he would come to our annual meetings, <sup>continues, same - around, into</sup> Of course, being in the Board of Education, he was around there, that's how I met him. I was associated with him most. Of course, I met him at different places, <sup>different times in preaching.</sup> But, we were <sup>very</sup> closely associated in the school way. *W.W.*

- There was an educational effort in Nashville before the school went out to Silver Pointe, right? Or was that afterwards?

H- The movement I have been told about was after they started at Silver Pointe.

B- He was in charge of that school?

H- At Silver Pointe, that's right.

B- And after that folded he came back and this 7 acre plot - is this the part Brother Burton gave money to and got?

H- No, no, we did that ourselves. The Burton movement was prior to that. And, I really think that's what inspired our group to make that movement.

B- What do you mean?

H- The Burton movement failed and it seemed to me that <sup>that</sup> inspired the people who were taking the lead to make this movement. At that time, Brother Black was living. Brother Walker and Dr. Fowler, he kind of headed that movement- buying the plot, making arrangements for paying for it and so forth.

B- I'm not clear in my mind. Would you record what you remember of the beginning of the educational effort in the Church of Christ, which came first and which came next and so on.

I think the first movement, I heard this, I don't know anything differently about it, of course I wasn't there at the time. I think it was started Jackson street then I think it went to Silver Pointe Tennessee, if I'm not mistaken. Brother Bowser had the school up

there. Then after that movement for some reason was started, in progress it came back to Nashville Tennessee. And that is where Brother Burton had his part in it. They started the school and some reason some controversy came up and the school was closed down. In a very few short weeks after it started. Then it seemed this inspired the colored brethren to put forth this effort.

B- And this is when Dr. Fowler took the lead then?

H- Yes, Dr. Fowler.

B- Then this is when they bought the 7 acres. Is this the site where N.C. I. remained?

H- No, that's the site that belonged to N.C.I. We named it Nashville Christian Institute. Never built there, we had a great big brick building on it. And we had hoped to convert that into a school building. We called it Nashville Christian Institute, N.C.I. But, the thing that happened, we were never able to convert this building, this property into a school property, the way of a school actually being in progress. Dr. Fowler and myself, we talked the matter over and we got in the wind, we found out that the city was interested in our property for an elementary school, which has been built on that property. We went down a little deeper into the matter and we inquired around and found out the amount of money that the city had appropriated for an elementary school. So, knowing that they were interested in our property, we approached them, or got in touch with them. And, we asked them about this property and we asked how much money they had appropriated to build a building on this property, or how much money they had appropriated for the land. Well, we found out that. There had been, I think, \$16,000. appropriated for the land for that school. We asked them \$16,000. for our property and, of course, they didn't want to give it. But, we finally came to this agreement, we will give you \$15,500. and the old Ashcroft School that was an old city school. And, so we made a deal. They paid us \$15,500. and gave us the old Ashcroft School (the city) in exchange for our property there and, of course, they built the elementary school there. We picked up the Ashcroft school in 1940 and we started the school there. *they had planned to build.*

B- Now, you were the first principle of this school? How did Brother Keeble come in?

H- Well, that's kind of a long story too. The white people after we had gotten into the work they had become interested. They furnished me a stenographer and an office there in the church building, to plan *my* *organization of the school, getting out the curriculum, etc* *especially the Central Church of Christ.*

B- In the Central Building?

H- In the Central Church of Christ Building. This lady they furnished me was fine, she could take dictation just like nobody's business. So, I worked there for weeks and worked out curriculum and we carried it ~~then~~ our board of trustees and they approved of it. So, we organized and moved out there and started in 1940. Brother Keeble <sup>came</sup> in later on - oh, - much later on. When Brother Keeble came to the Nashville Christian Institute I had been successful in having the school accredited to the state of Tennessee as a high school. I didn't do it, I didn't do it. It was the people I knew.

B- People you used to work for?

H- People I worked for and people I worked with. See, I was acquainted with all the principles of state schools - Morris and Irons and Brister <sup>Qm.</sup> ~~Truman~~ Smith. They came to my office a lot of times. You see, it is a peculiar thing, but it usually works that way. If you ask people you can gain their confidence and they believe you are trying to do something, they will volunteer and help you on a lot of things. I could not have gotten that school

accredited in 18 months by myself because there were county schools along there and they weren't accredited. You have to know somebody. It wasn't what I knew, it was the persons new. Those fellows, it's an actual fact, after they knew I was interested in the school and interested in doing something for the people, they would come to my office and sit down and talk to me about those things I had become interested in and they would tell me what to do that I didn't know to do. And that's how I got that school established. That's how I got that school accredited. It was accredited with the state as a high school. Of course, there was a loss of accreditation long before we quit because nobody ever put in for it again.

B- You mean whoever took it over, Keeble or whoever, they didn't know what to do in terms of filling out forms?

H- I don't know if they didn't know what to do or if you were interested. You see sometimes, I <sup>have</sup> to admit I was <sup>in contact with</sup> ~~going with~~ the other fellow. They no doubt was <sup>working with</sup> ~~going with~~ somebody else too. I'm not saying that's a fact, but it surley was because when they had the lawsuit about it, the school it was brought out in the court that nobody, since the time I was there had put in for any ~~found purpose~~ <sup>final accreditation</sup>, that was brought out in the court trial.

B- Well, then it is true now you were the first principle and you were the...

H- I was the first man at the school in charge, I was the first man that organized the school. I was the first man that got out the cirricular for the school and everything. I was the first man to put out a bulletin for the school. Well, they never did put out but one and, that is the one I put out. I'm sorry I wish I had it here, it is down at the church now in my desk drawer. I would like you to see it.

B- I would love to see it. Would you tell a little more about this organization and who helped you get started besides this Dr. ~~Power~~ <sup>Fowler</sup>?

H- Oh, you mean the school - actually the school?

B- Right

H- When it comes to handling the property, Dr. <sup>Fowler</sup> ~~Power~~, he's the man that took the lead. We worked together. We went together to see how much money was appropriated by the city to buy this school. We found out they were interested in our property, of course it was to our advantage to find that out, so we would know how to talk to them. And, I think we were very successful because they had nearly \$16,000 or so any way, we asked them \$16,000 and we ~~found they~~ <sup>settled</sup> on agreeing on paying \$15,500 and giving us the old Ashcroft school building. We could and did start a school there.

B- Who was the first faculty?

H- Oh, I would have to look in the bulletin. All my teachers were accredited except me. That's right.

B- I remember back you talked about the teaching you did and everything. Did you, or were you, required to do any kind of accrediting for yourself as the leader of an educational institution?

H- No, if I had, I couldn't have headed it. I couldn't have headed if I had because that wasn't required, I don't know why. You see, in private schools it is a little bit different to some of the schools. See, Keeble was just a fourth grade scholar, he trained, but he was made president.

B- Well, you ran the school for how many years?

H- Oh, about 3 years.

B- And then what happened?

H- Well, some things came up and I decided I had rendered my best service there so, I left.

B- You don't want to talk about it?

H- Well, I don't know that it would do any good to talk about it. Some things transpired that I didn't feel that I could approve of or put up with and therefore I just sent in my letter of resignation.

B- You mean you had a disagreement with the board? Did you have a board?

H- Yes, we had a board of trustees, advisor board, board of directors.

B- These black or white or both?

H- Both.

B- Were these some of the continued board that stayed with Brother Keebles' organization?

H- Some where.

B- Now, I am trying to tie in with the rest of your career when you were in the state offices in the Education Department. I presume when an election changed, you got out with your friends.

H- You mean politics?

B- Yes

H- That's right, when politics changed, we changed. They were very nice you know, they fired me in that nice way, asked me to send in my resignation. *I was made to do that, too.*

B- Then after you lost your income from that source, then what did you do? Is this when you went into the education - the N.C.I.?

H- Well, no, I was preaching in Atlanta. I preached there for a number of years.

B- After you left the offices of education?

H- *yes.* I went about preaching one place or another. I finally settled in Atlanta by chance. I agreed to preach for them one month and stayed there seven years. *after that, they couldn't get along of me.*

B- Which congregation?

H- The Simpson Street congregation.

B- Was that the oldest?

H- Yes.

B- And the only?

H- No, they have about 3 there now I think.

B- Back then -

H- Oh, that was the only one then. It was started by ~~the people~~ <sup>Brother Keeble</sup>.

B- You stayed with N.C.I. three years then you went to Atlanta?

H- No, I was at Atlanta, I was preaching part of the time when I was establish the school there, go back and forth.

B- Atlanta?

H- Yes, I would leave on <sup>Saturday</sup> Saturday, preach <sup>Sunday</sup> Sunday, and Sunday night. Catch the train out, then get back to Nashville Monday morning. <sup>+ go to school.</sup>

B- I want to go back. I learned early in life the black church had two great leaders, Keeble and Bowser, and so on, and do you have any personal rememerances or any comments about this seperation or how it came about? You seem to be more under the Bowser influence than the Keeble. Keeble personally turn you off or what?

H- Just wasn't around him.

B- You obviously choose not to be around him in some sense.

H- No, no, it just so happened. I wasn't around. You see, Brother Keeble stayed out on the field most all the time, you see. And, I chanced to be in the present company of Bowser by virtue of the fact that he was working in the school work. Brother Keeble, he didn't do nothing with the school until, oh well, after the school had been started the Nashville Christian Institute. He didn't play no part. <sup>He was active in the meetings</sup> He was appointed when they were getting ready to organize the school to raise money for the school. Now, as to how much money he raised, I don't know. It just appeared to me that he didn't have the interest in the school work some other people had. I never knew him to take no active part in school work. Not the school in Arkansas or the school in Silver Pointe, <sup>nor the Burton effort that started & failed.</sup> <sup>I just don't know.</sup>

B- When did Brother Burton put him on salary? What year? Before this time?

H- I think so, I couldn't say for sure. I just learned he was suppose to, I think Brother Burton told me that, but I think he supported him for a number of years. A long time -- possibly before the school work was in progress. I couldn't say for sure, but it seems way back when he started supporting him.

B- When did you meet Brother Burton, and did you have much contact with him?

(End side 1, Tape II)

Side 2 of Tape II has blank space for <sup>several</sup> ~~a few~~ minutes.

H-Brother Burton liked it. Burton took care of it in many ways, other people didn't - he didn't appeal to other people seemingly, but Brother Burton, he got next to them and that thru him we got that \$50,000 worth of stock placed in positions where we could use interest off it.

B- Did that money stay with the school until it's end?

H- I don't know. You see, I was away from there for a long time before the school ended.

B- Well, back to this *Lacy* Elrod, how did he get in touch with you, or you with him?

H- Well, I really don't know. I really think that Brother Burton sent him out there. As I say, he seemed to be pretty close to Brother Burton and also his wife - Brother Burtons' wife. We needed his help. It was either Brother Burton or his wife one that sent him out there. We had a lot of the white Brethern working for us when I was out there, we had colored teachers and 6 white. The whites, we ~~supposed~~ *had white teachers*, to be part-time.

B- We were talking about the school and the faculty you had at N.C.I. Let me ask you about Brother Pullins. What connection did you have and when did he come in, did he come into the scene with Brother Burton?

H- He came in while I was there to the extent that he did some of the printing of the bulletin and all printing ~~of the ads.~~ *that we had*. He looked after that and gave us advantage of that, of course he no doubt worked with Brother Burton. I recall him talking to Brother Burton about the school, they talked to each other about it, but I haven't been in the conversation ~~session~~ with the two together regarding the school or anything else.

P Let me ask you about your personel life, were you ever married?

H- Yes, I was married. I think in 1917 and the girl to whom I was married was named Georgia Mae Williams. We lived together about 12 years and for her own reasons she left. I was working for the state. I had a office with the state as I told you before and she left - that is just about it.

B- She is living where?

H- She is living at Nashville now. She stays with her niece.

B- In 1968 when Brother Keeble died, Brother *Revel* ~~Evans~~ *Lemmons*, the editor for the *Farm* Foundation in Austin, Texas, wrote an editorial stating that there was an infinitesimally small amount of ~~prejudice~~ *racism* in the Church of Christ. Do you have any comment on this?

H- Well, I think he is wrong. There was at that time and is now. It may not be as great as it was, but it is still there. And, I would like to say this, it is not a one-sided thing on both sides there are prejudices ~~yet~~ *still* existing and they are being manifested from time to times. Although there has been quite a lot accomplished toward bringing the Negro and the White people together there are just as many people prejudice in the church now as there were in the beginning, both black and white.

B- I have a picture here of some church leaders who got together in Atlanta to talk about the racial situation. Were you at that meeting?

H- No, but I have a bulletin or a publication on it, also one they had in Nashville Tennessee.

B- Were you in that one?

H- I was there two nights. I didn't have very much to say.

What in your opinion is the most significant work being done toward improving the relationship of our heritage in the church?

H- I really don't know what is being done. There are a lot of changes being made, but I don't know how effective the changes are. You have to be pretty closely connected with any movement to be able to say too much about it.

B- The Christian Colleges and I am thinking now primarily of the white Christian Colleges. Do you think they are making significant progress?

H- I'm afraid they are not making enough.

B- What should they be doing that they are not doing?

H- Well, that is hard to say, as I said awhile ago, you have to be pretty closely connected with any institution or any movement to speak definitely about this movement or institution. I can have a lot of things in my mind and I can know a lot of things are wrong, but not being directly connected with it there is little you can say definitely regarding it. I know under some circumstances these white Christian Colleges of ours could not get certain money that they needed without intergration in the schools, we all know that. As to how far or how significant or how much is being done now under condition, or you might call it pressure, that they have, I can't tell. I don't know what would be done without this pressure. If I was getting money from some source, and I was required to do something and if I hadn't been doing it part of this time, and I would do it if the pressure is put on me, I just don't know how far it goes. In the Christian Colleges now we just have a token intergration. That's all we have. Now, you see here is the position I'm in, I don't know whether we would do this or not if certain pressures weren't put on me. You wouldn't know why I did or not but I do know this, you did do it when the pressure was put on. I don't know what you would do, if the pressure wasn't put on and I know pressure shouldn't level out these things. It should come by matters of Christianity and right doings and right living and treating your family right and do it from the standpoint of Christianity. now that's what a fellow has to think about.

B- You have been in Detroit how long?

H- Since 1933.

B- What brought you here?

H- Well, I had let myself down at the N.C.I. I really came here for a rest, that's what I came here for.

B- Did you rest?

H- No, I couldn't rest. I walked the streets day and night. I couldn't be satisfied. I had been down to the Board of Education even got tired of the Board of Education, moved away. A friend of mine said, he would get me a job, he was well known down there. Mr. Manow was the present manager, says well, I don't know anything we have right now, but we will fix up something in the office for him for a few days. In maybe a week, we will get him a job, he said, listen, if you just can't be satisfied, just have to work. I have a job you can do now until they get something straightened out in the office for you. It is not your line of work, I need a janitor over to Cass Tech. School. You can live there & work until they get something ready for you here, if you just can't be satisfied. He said you can go to work every evening at 3 o'clock and get off at 11 o'clock and go home. I said, well, I'll go over there and work awhile. So when I had been to work 3 days and I called the office, told them I didn't want a job in the office. They said, why? I said, this is the kind of job I like. I said I been working the school in Nashville



and I've <sup>down</sup> just worked ~~on~~. And, he said, well if you want to do that kind of work. Where do you live? Didn't you say you lived on <sup>Wayne</sup> University, where you don't even have to ride the streetcar, you can walk on back and forth. I thought, nuts. <sup>He moved me up there and I worked there for ten years.</sup> And, at the time, every summer, we had five weeks vacation with pay down there. So, I'd go up and I'd take off about 3 weeks, and I'd hold meetings through the summer. My salary was coming in for five weeks, and I was preaching right there and they gave me a little something. So, one time I stayed eight weeks - gone eight weeks. So, that's when I found that was the greatest thing in the world for me, even got a better job. After I worked there awhile, they built a new engineering building on Main. When they built that building, I had enough seniority so they put me over to that building, gave me a ~~cleaning man~~ <sup>man</sup> to clean up the building at night. One man came at 4 o'clock and left at 11 o'clock. I'd just have to go over there and stay all day till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. But, my preaching worked out <sup>so nicely</sup> so I could lay that job down. So, I laid that one down in 1954.

B- Where you preaching all the time you've been here?

H- <sup>Principally</sup> ~~Been preaching~~ all the time I've been here.

B- Where?

H- <sup>In the</sup> County. In 1944 we bought the Joseph Compau Building <sup>for the new where they moved,</sup> for that year. We paid \$50,000 for that building. We paid for it, raised the money and paid for it. When the congregation <sup>was</sup> worshipping at Cameron, <sup>when we were there,</sup> the ~~eldest~~ <sup>man</sup> asked me to come back to Cameron, this little building I showed you out here, and reestablish ~~the~~ congregation. And what we have now is the result of my having come back there. In '45. I started there in February, 1945. We have built us a decent meeting house, we have grown in number, we have something. I have a committee now working on getting all the members names and addresses to compile a new list, that I know is between 250 and 300. We baptized two yesterday. Two weeks prior to that, we baptized four. We're baptizing people right along down there now. I don't know how much good we're doing. But, we're baptizing folks, anyway.

B- Well, that sounds pretty good. What are the big differences between the white and the black Churches of Christ that's been the method of organization whereby the whites' have always featured elders of local churches, the blacks have seemed to center around the Evangelists. Do you want to comment on this, and how this came about and any other reflections you have on this point.

H- Well, it's a <sup>kind of difficult for</sup> ~~serious kind of difference~~ <sup>can</sup> to me. I understand, I think, about the Negro people, <sup>they're</sup> selecting elders. Now, in that case especially, and I think it's so in most cases in most congregations, if I do interpret the Bible correctly, we just have come to the place now where we have men who <sup>and</sup> haven't been <sup>in a general way,</sup> have men who could qualify and who may have been wanting to qualify. You see, I asked my brethren at Cameron Avenue. Are you aspiring to be an elder or a deacon, or do you think you could qualify? I said, now you got to have some knowledge of this. You can't just do this because I say so, or someone else says you ought to be an elder or you ought to be a deacon. Are you aspiring? In other words, do you think you can fill the position? My brethren tell me no. <sup>They weren't going to do.</sup> I've asked all the brethren that I've had since I've been down there since '45 - do you think you can qualify, would you aspire to be an elder or a leader in the church? They all didn't qualify. Well, it is suggested to me some of my brethren that you ought to have a class, and teach men how to be elders and so forth. Well, I try to teach that in the pulpit all the time. I teach that - qualifications. Well, if you teach the qualification and a man says, I can't qualify, what can you do? What would you do in a case like that?

B- It's hard for me to approach that situation. I've been talking with Brother Hobart, for one, who really gave me a stomping on the business, and I know usually what is the typical response of a white man. He says, well you never do have people qualifying because you never really want people qualifying, and therefore the church has been so orientated around the Evangelists and you've always emphasized that the church ought to be taking care of the Evangelists, to such an extent that you never really do, in your heart, encourage another pattern, which has been the white pattern.

H- That's true. But when a fellow asks and makes the inquire and tells of the need and then men refuse, you see, you take it in general, in a general way, the general pattern. Of course, it ought to be getting better now. You have had men who were better qualified, because, as you say, they were better taught to become elders. They were inspired to become elders. We just don't have the men. You take men in at my age, and 20 years younger, and, I say, 40 years younger, when they came along and there wasn't much of an incentive to prepare for a leadership and all the things like that. And, another thing, their educational facilities were, in many cases, were not as great as you all had. And all those things have a lot to do with it. You had advantage of the things that we hope to be getting advantage of now that we haven't had - better sources for qualified men, better sources to obtain education. An equal education is what we're fighting for now. But, we didn't have it back then, you know we didn't. Consequently, we didn't have men as well prepared. You all had the advantage of some things that we didn't have, consequently, we couldn't be as well prepared. In fact, we just couldn't fit the pattern. We didn't have what it took to do the work. That's my version of the matter.

B- Fine. Do you want to make any comments on the black power movement generally, and on it's thrust and how much it's effected the church, and how much you want to encourage it or how not to encourage it.

H- The present black power - I don't have no use for it at all. Now, some of the principles that they stand for, I stand for. But, their method of operation in obtaining the things that they want, I don't approve of it.

B- You mean by violence.

H- By violence, that's right. No man can fool with that and be right.

B- What is the role of the church in the area of civil rights, and giving a greater place to the dignity of the black man, or even the black nation, as some speak of?

H- Well, we have some who hold their head up, and they believe in the things that are right. They believe in dignity, they believe in right. Then we have some, of course, that are in a class, or catagory, that are with this black power movement and all that kind of stuff. But, the intelligent Negro now, generally speaking, he doesn't go for that stuff.

B- Why?

H- Because he knows it's not right. He has learned. He's better learned than he was years ago. They're having better advantages at education and knowing things and knowing right and wrong. Of course, we have some people now - they're ignorant. It's the ignorant set of people that is pushing this black power in the direction that it's going. It's not the intelligent Negro. You can just trace it up. Maybe, some of them counts himself intelligent, but it's a fake. They wanted a lot of things that the white man thought wanted for years. He just didn't ever have the right opportunity to express himself as to where he stood in all those kind of things. We have had a few intelligent Negroes

for years back, but they were so few they didn't weigh much, you see. *There are some vices now that govern some people. They have the sway.*

B- Is this good?

H- No, not always good. It's good as long as it's going in the right direction. It's awfully bad when it's going the other way, and it's been going the other way for years.

B- Do you want to make any comments on Martin Luther King?

H- Well, I think Martin Luther King was one of the intelligent Negro men as ever I heard speak. He was a man, in my estimation, that stood for a principle. And, a man that carried out the principles for which he stood. And, I think that's what it takes to make a man - anyplace, anytime, anywhere - believe in a principle, believe it's right, fight for the thing that you think is right. Don't fight in a wrong way for a thing you think is right. And I don't think Martin Luther King fought in the wrong way. Martin Luther King didn't believe in violence. Martin Luther King suffered violence. I tell you, by way of comparison, he's just about another Moses' for the Negroes.

B- Was it a Christian act or could a Christian march with him?

H- Yes - Now let me think about that- You mean a member of the Church of Christ Christian march with him? - I believe he could. Because he didn't violate the laws of the land and I don't see no way he violated the laws of God.

B- Ok, if a Christian could do it, let me go a step further. Should a Christian have been with him?

H- If he's right, a Christian should have been with him.

*(end of tape)*